

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:-
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All Carbohydrates Are NOT Created Equal

Southeast Area Extension Agent, Jean Justice reminds us that carbohydrates play an important role when desiring to lose weight. Many people mistakenly believe they have to stop eating carbohydrates to lose weight. In reality, choosing complex, higher-fiber carbohydrates, such as beans, grains, fruits and vegetables may help you eat less because they help you feel full faster. But refined carbohydrates such as bakery items; crackers, sugary foods, pancakes, waffles, packaged sweet cereals, packaged snack treats and chips, all add up to a lot of empty calories very fast.

Refined carbohydrate foods have been processed from whole ingredients but have the important things like fiber and nutrients removed during the process. Sugar and white flour are examples of these types of refined foods.

Refining makes foods tastier but also higher in calories. Examples: 8 ounces (1 cup) cooked whole wheat cereal equals 149 calories; 8 ounces of French bread is 403 calories; and 8 ounces of cookies is 1020 calories. The more a food is refined with added sugars and/or fats, the tastier and more irresistible they become, especially to those with a sweet tooth.

Unrefined or whole plant foods are foods that are not refined or are near natural state. In most cases these foods are lower in calories, higher in fiber, and more have nutrients than refined foods. Examples of whole foods are fruits, vegetables, beans or legumes and whole grains such as wheat, oats and barley.

Whole plant foods are generally not as tasty so you don't usually over eat them. Also, they help you feel full on fewer calories. Let's compare potato foods: 4 ounces of baked potato is 82 calories; 4 ounces of French fries is 348 calories; and 4 ounces of potato chips is 608 calories.

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The form of the food plays a major role in calorie intake. A fresh 5 ounce apple contains 73 calories while a 5 ounce slice of apple pie contains 389 calories. A fresh peach contains 38 calories while the same amount of canned peaches in heavy syrup contains 73 calories. The form of a food can double; triple and even quadruple the calorie intake in one serving.

Carbohydrates are the fuel our body needs to function. To lose weight remember to choose complex carbohydrates that are high in water, fiber, minimally processed and have low to moderate calories. People who lost weight and kept it off long term (more than 1-2 years) eat a high-fiber, low fat diet and exercise regularly.

For more information on nutrition and diet, contact your local Extension Office.